

by Master Sgt. Lono Kollars



## Changes make Soto Cano more permanent

SOTO CANO AIR BASE, Honduras — Traits that for 20 years made this tiny Central American outpost a bit unique among U.S. military bases are starting to erode. That's good.

The culprit? Change. But Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors and Marines of Joint Task Force-Bravo welcome them. Changes will help them do their mission and provide a better

standard of living.

Once Airmen deployed to the remote Honduran air force base on a one-year tour. Now they can deploy to the base for 120 days and meet their Air and Space Expeditionary Force obligations. They'll fill 43 of 158 positions the Army cannot fill because of commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Soldiers and Sailors will fill most of the remaining slots.

Today, most troops live in wooden "hooches." But ongoing construction will replace 270 hooches [with no indoor plumbing] with 44 four-unit apartment buildings and seven two-story, 72-occupant dormitories. Plans are to rebuild most base buildings in five to seven years.

"I wish the changes were in place right now," said

Senior Airman Heather Kowalski, a firefighter. The benefits? More space and privacy for everyone, she said. "We need that."

Army Col. Rick Bassett commands the joint task force's more than 600 troops. They maintain the largest runway in the country to support counterdrug and humanitarian missions, provide search and rescue and afford a U.S. presence in the region. It's the "only forward-deployed element in Southern Command's area of responsibility," he said.

As the command's "first response" force, he said the changes underscore the U. S. commitment to the region. But he won't say if the construction means a permanent U.S. presence in Honduras. "It means as permanent as permanent can be for the foreseeable future, yes."

— Louis A. Arana-Barradas and  
1st Lt. Megan Schafer



The Americas

by Tech. Sgt. Cecilio Riccio Jr.



## Group prepares for emergency actions in Asia

SAN ANTONIO — There's a contingency response group at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, that was only two-months old when it jumped into action during the Christmas Eve tsunami in Asia.

Activated in November 2000, the 613th Contingency Response Squadron was the first of its kind in the Pacific Air Forces. Although there are similar teams in other parts of the world, the 613th's responsibility is the largest: It

extends from the U.S.'s west coast to the east coast of Africa, and from the Arctic to the Antarctic — more than 100 million square miles. The area is home to nearly 2 billion people who live in 44 countries.

With that kind of responsibility, everyone knew the squadron would expand quickly. In January 2003, the squadron outgrew its squadron status and became a group. In 2004, it gained a Tanker Airlift Control Element. In October 2004, the group became operational, and two months later they were in Sri Lanka helping that country recover from a tsunami disaster the likes the world has never seen.

The group consists of 140 Airmen with 40 different specialties, which are carefully selected so the team can remain lean, agile and able to deploy within 24 hours. The group is made up of officers and enlisted

members who specialize in civil engineering, communications, fuels, logistics, contracting, financial management, force protection, intelligence, counterintelligence, medical and airfield operations.

They are set to pounce on a full range of possible scenarios — from a short-notice deployment of a two-person security team to a full-scale humanitarian effort, like the tsunami recovery.

When the Air Force needs an expert opinion during an emergency in the Pacific, it calls on the 613th Contingency Response Squadron so members can size up a situation and make recommendations for follow-on support or forces.

When the group isn't involved in real-world situations, they are practicing their mission at least twice a month, ready to handle the next emergency that may arise in a command with the Air Force's largest area of responsibility.

— Master Sgt.  
Orville F. Desjarlais Jr.



The Pacific



by Army Sgt. David Foley



# U.S. pilots train Iraqi counterparts to fly C-130

TALLIL AIR BASE, Iraq — U.S. pilots are training their Iraqi counterparts to fly three C-130 Hercules the Iraqi air force received from the Department of Defense.

Airmen from the 777th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron at Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark., are working hand-in-hand with pilots and crewmembers who served in Saddam

Hussein's air force before Operation Iraqi Freedom. Maj. Roger Redwood, operations flight commander for the 23rd Advisory Support Team that is part of the 777th EAS, estimates Iraq's 23rd Squadron will be fully functional by May 2006.

While many of the new recruits have ample flight experience, their exposure to English has been more limited, officials said.

"Most of the officers can communicate pretty well, but they have a hard time understanding the radio calls from air traffic control," Major Redwood said. "They know the airplanes. They know the systems. They can do it all in Arabic, but we require them to do it in English, because if they are going to fly worldwide, they will need to be able to do it in English."

Major Redwood said the

Iraqi airmen are true patriots and want to help their country. Most of them were higher ranking when in Saddam's air force. Even though they are taking a significant pay cut in the new Iraqi air force, there is a greater concern for some than money. One of the Iraqi pilots, who asked to remain anonymous, said he lives in fear of the insurgency every day because of what he's doing.

"There is a threat for anyone who is trying to build this country at this time," he said.

The major said there have been several incidents where insurgents have targeted family members of the Iraqi airmen, and every time he wonders if the airmen will come back to the training, but they always do.

— Army Sgt. David Foley  
Multi-National Corps-Iraq  
Public Affairs



The Central AOR

# New wing enhances support in United Kingdom

ROYAL AIR FORCE MILDENHALL, England — A new United States Air Forces in Europe wing will provide support to its geographically

separated units in the United Kingdom.

The Airmen of the 501st Combat Support Wing will focus on units that are separated from main operating bases of Royal Air Forces Mildenhall and Lakenheath.

"The activation of the [new wing] will provide USAFE with a wing of functional experts dedicated to supporting of U.S. Air Force's geographically separated units in the United Kingdom," said Gen. Robert H. "Doc" Foglesong, USAFE

commander.

Previously, separated units in the United Kingdom, including bases in Fairford, Croughton, Alconbury, Molesworth and Menwith Hill, reported to the 38th CSW at Sembach Annex, Germany.

This change will provide a better centralized service to address support-related issues and a structure to focus on solutions for regional matters that affect separated units, General Foglesong said.

"It's just a smarter way of conducting business and serving our customers better," General Foglesong said.

— Capt. Heather Healy  
3rd Air Force Public Affairs

Europe



by Master Sgt. John Lasky



MIHAIL KOGALNICEANU AIRFIELD, Romania — **Senior Airmen Jason Dunigan pounds a stake into the ground** while building a 50-foot mast for exercise Combined Endeavor 2005 in May. Airman Dunigan is assigned to the 1st Combat Communications Squadron from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, that is preparing communications equipment for the exercise. Combined Endeavor 2005, a Partnership for Peace exercise

sponsored by U.S. European Command in cooperation with German and Romanian ministries of defense, is the largest and most complex communications and information system military exercise in the world. Over 13 days, 43 nations will conduct more than 1,400 interoperability tests of command, control, communications and computer equipment systems for supporting future combined humanitarian, peacekeeping and disaster relief operations.